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CIA Envisioned Soviet Scientists As U.S. Agents

By Patrick Oster
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The Central Intelligence Agency secretly financed a research project at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in order to gain data on how to turn Russian scientists into CIA agents.

As part of its Project MK-ULTRA, the CIA, using a private foundation as a "front," spent a total of \$12,000 in 1958 and 1959 on determining "what criteria can be developed in spotting and assessing [Soviet scientists] as potential agent recruits," according to CIA memos obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times.

The research was conducted by Anthony J. Wiener, who at the time was affiliated with MIT's Center for International Studies, which was set up in 1951 with CIA money and had as its first director Max F. Millikan, a former assistant director of the agency.

Wiener, currently a consultant with the Hudson Institute "think tank" in New York, was apparently an unwitting pawn in the CIA's mind-control project.

The research, which relied heavily on interviews with American and Western scientists returning from the Soviet Union, was financed by the now defunct Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology, A New York-based CIA front set up in the 1950s to provide a legitimate cover for CIA research projects, including some involving "brainwashing."

In a CIA memo dated Sept. 17, 1958, an agency official outlined the real purpose of Wiener's research: "Given a model or prototype [of a scientist], it is desired that guidance be provided as regards the most effective way or ways in which repressed and rationalized anti-regime motivations may be aroused or, more properly, re-activated."

"The purpose of the above projects," the memo said, "will be to sharpen our sights and methods as respects the spotting, development and recruitment of selected types of citizens."

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